

Student Mental Health Policy

Document control table

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2. Approved by	Education Committee

Policy development steps

3. Legal implications of this policy area.	Equality Act 2010
4. Consultation for this policy	Senior management, SSS, SU, Ed Committee, SWISC
5. Related procedures/guidance	Safeguarding and Prevent policy, Drug and Alcohol Misuse policy, Support to Study policy, Reasonable Adjustments policy, Flexible Study policy. Disability Policy (to be approved)
6. Version history	V3 Final
7. Monitoring	SWISC
8. Date of issue	22/11/2023
9. Review date	22/11/2026

1. Introduction

1.1 University of Leicester is committed to creating a safe and supportive environment that nurtures the health and wellbeing of its students to enable them to flourish and fulfil their potential as citizens of change. Health and wellbeing is one of the core guiding principles of the University's research-inspired education strategy, placing it at the heart of the community.

1.2 It is recognised across the Higher Education sector that students' mental health is a crucial factor in their overall wellbeing and can impact their experience at university as well as their academic progression and attainment.

1.3 Attending university can represent a major transitional point in the lives of students which brings about new and exciting experiences as well as being potentially challenging due to academic, financial, and social pressures.

1.4 The University understands that the transitional aspect of university life, its intensity and pace can bring about mental health difficulties as well as exacerbating pre-existing mental health conditions.

1.5 Recognising the legal obligations under Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Mental Health Act 2007, Equality Act 2010 and Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the University will take reasonable steps to support and protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of students.

1.6 Under the Equality Act 2010, students with significant and long-term mental health conditions will be entitled to reasonable adjustments to ensure accessible participation in their learning, please see Reasonable Adjustments Policy for further details.

1.7 The Data protection Act 2018 and the University's Data Protection Policy are key to understanding how sensitive data is gathered, used and stored.

1.8 A whole institutional approach will be implemented when addressing student mental health which will ensure that all students across the mental health continuum are supported. To demonstrate this commitment the University is part of the Mental Health Charter Programme and follows the recommendations from the programme to implement the whole institutional approach covering the key domains of Learn, Support, Live and Work.

1.9 The support for students will operate within a framework of key areas of prevention, early intervention, specialist intervention and crisis management. This broad mental health support framework incorporates the UUK's Suicide Safer Framework of prevention, intervention and postvention.

1.10 In all safeguarding matters, the University will have full due regard to its obligations under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 and associated Office for Students guidance, provided that compliance does not conflict with the University's statutory and common law duties to safeguard its community.

2. Definitions and Terminology

2.1 Mental health conditions refer to clinically diagnosable conditions. They may be long or short term and the severity varies.

2.2 Mental health difficulties/Psychological distress is a broader term which is used to encompass different psychological experiences without medicalising them.

2.3 Wellbeing refers to “a state of being comfortable, healthy and happy”, according to the Oxford dictionary. It encompasses good mental health, life satisfaction, sense of purpose and feeling in control. Good wellbeing ensures resilience and ability to manage stress.

3. Policy Aims

3.1 This policy aims to:

- Articulate a clear framework which will ensure a consistent approach towards students’ and prospective students’ mental health needs across the University. See the Mental Health Framework in Appendix 4.
- Clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all staff in relation to supporting students’ mental health.
- Provide information about the support available to students and prospective students within the university around mental health.

4. Scope of Policy

4.1 This policy covers all current students and apprentices.

4.2 For prospective students, pre-entry support includes:

- Information about support services available once they start at the University
- Appointments available with the AccessAbility Centre to discuss support needs for students with a disability, long-term health condition, Autistic Spectrum Condition, ADHD, Specific Learning Differences, and mental health conditions.

4.3 This policy does not address the mental health needs of university staff who are encouraged to consult with the Human Resources department for further information and support.

4.4 All staff are expected to follow this policy in relation to supporting students’ mental health.

4.5 It is to be understood that this policy does not offer an alternative or replacement for external mental health services and it does not replicate the NHS mental health provision.

4.6 The university does not offer a crisis service and its support services are not available outside of working hours (9-5pm Monday to Friday).

4.7 The Drug and Alcohol Misuse policy refers to this policy where students are using substances as self-medication for issues with mental health, and cross referral between NHS services is required. Both policies should be referred to in these instances.

4.8 Where mental health is impacting academic studies, this policy should be followed in conjunction with the Reasonable Adjustment policy, Fitness to Practice Policies, Support to Study Policy and Mitigating Circumstances policy.

5. The University's Approach to Support

5.1 The support available at the University is informed by the Universities UK Step Change framework and adopts a whole university approach to supporting student mental health and wellbeing which is also recommended by the Mental Health Charter programme.

5.2 The University recognises the recommendations made by the Office for Students, that in order to ensure that supportive measures are inclusive and accessible it is important to work with the broader mental health spectrum than just with the students that have a declared mental health condition.

5.3 Working with the whole of the mental health spectrum would ensure that support does not miss the following groups of students:

- Students that have not reported a mental health condition but are experiencing difficulties
- Students that are in crisis and too unwell to access healthcare
- Students who are experiencing low wellbeing which if not intervened early can lead to a mental health condition

5.4 The support operates within a mental health framework which incorporates the Suicide Safer Framework, ensuring the mental health spectrum is covered (see Appendix 4 for further details). The framework has the following key areas:

- **Prevention:** Raising awareness, psychoeducation and promoting pro-active ways to looking after mental health and wellbeing. Pro-active measures also include, raising awareness of suicide prevention through training and campaigns with the aim of reducing stigma and encouraging students to access support.
- **Early Intervention:** Training and guidance for staff to equip them on how to spot signs of psychological distress and information about where and when to signpost students for support. Clear communication about support services and engagement activities for students to support their wellbeing.
- **Specialist Intervention:** A targeted approach for when students require specialist input from student support services and/or from external specialist services and/or NHS services.
- **Crisis Management:** Clear escalation process for students experiencing mental health crisis, guidance includes referral to concerned@, Cause for Concern and external emergency and mental health services. In the event of a student's unexpected death/suspected death by suicide, the University will implement its Fatalities Procedure. The Fatalities Procedure addresses the following key Suicide Safer Framework Postvention elements:
 - Team and individual roles responsible for response
 - Collecting information
 - Supporting those affected
 - Quick response pathways
 - Internal and external communications

- Legacy and anniversaries
- Serious Incident review
- Managing external agencies e.g., emergency services, press, coroner, embassy

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 As part of the University's approach to creating a supportive culture which contributes to the prevention and de-stigmatisation of mental health difficulties, all staff are expected to follow this policy and understand their responsibilities when supporting a student experiencing a mental health difficulty or concern.

6.2 All students are encouraged to disclose if they have a mental health condition or are experiencing mental health difficulty as this would enable the university to provide support.

6.3 Whilst the University offers basic Mental Health Awareness training to assist staff in offering support to others experiencing a mental health difficulty, staff are not expected to assume responsibilities outside the parameters of their capabilities or professional role. Instead, University staff with designated roles connected to mental health are available to provide guidance and support in relation to this policy.

6.3 The University's Student Support Services are responsible for delivering specialist interventions to support student mental health, here are a range of interventions offered by each of the Services (please note this is not an exhaustive list):

- **Student Wellbeing Service:** talking therapies, counselling through Health Assured (an external counselling service provider), wellbeing check-ins, mental health advice, liaising with external mental health services, risk assessments and management of crisis and psychoeducation.
- **Student Welfare Service, including Standing Together Team:** financial advice and support, support for personal and academic issues – including support with taking a break from studies, support for students experiencing unacceptable behaviours and abuse.
- **AccessAbility Centre:** specialist mentoring, study support, reasonable adjustments assessment and implementation, assessed work cover sheets, guidance and advocacy, support with applying for Disabled Student's Allowance.

6.4 All staff are responsible for acknowledging mental health disclosures made to them by appropriately signposting the student to the relevant internal (Student Support Services) or external (GP if non-urgent, Emergency Services if urgent and life threatening) support.

6.5 Staff working with students are responsible for signposting students to relevant support services when they spot signs of mental health difficulty or decline, please see Appendix 2 for details.

6.6 As recommended by the Mental Health Charter staff in academic schools and departments are responsible for supporting student mental health by:

- Attending mental health awareness training
- Implementing reasonable adjustments where required, please see the Reasonable Adjustment policy for more details
- Ensuring the curriculum design and assessment strategies are inclusive and accessible

6.7 University Residential Life staff are responsible for ensuring a mentally healthy environment in university owned accommodation as outlined in the Mental Health Charter.

6.8 The Mental Health Working group chaired by the Director of Student Services and Belonging will ensure the implementation of this policy across the university and will be reporting into the Assurance group.

6.9 The Assurance group will ensure compliance to this policy and the legal obligations in relation to mental health and will report to the Executive Board and Senate.

6.10 The Mental Health Working group will ensure the implementation of the Mental Health Charter work.

7. Information Sharing

7.1 Data provided to the University is held under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018.

7.2 Sensitive category data, such as information about health is shared on the basis of students providing informed consent. The only instance when consent is not sought is on the basis of vital interest, i.e., when sharing information is essential to the student's life. Please see the University's Data Protection Policy for details.

7.3 In accordance with following good practice recommendations around partnership working by UUK and OfS, the University works closely with Leicestershire Partnership Trust, local GP surgeries and local universities, to enhance support pathways for students.

7.4 An information sharing agreement is in place with the local GP surgery practice (Victoria Park Health Centre) and as outlined in the agreement, information is shared on the basis of consent provided by the student.

8. Trusted Contacts

8.1 Following the recommendations by the Universities UK and the LEARN network, the University will ensure systems and processes are in place to collect details for Trusted Contacts from students at registration.

8.2 A trusted contact is a person the student trusts and has their best interest. The trusted contact needs to be over the age of 18. This can be a family member, carer, guardian, friend, GP or any other relation.

8.3 It will be a mandatory requirement for students to share trusted contact details at registration.

8.4 Students will be able to update their trusted contact details on My Student Records if needed at any point during their study.

8.5 The University will use the trusted contact to share concerns about the student's wellbeing. This will be done with the consent from the student where possible.

8.6 If consent cannot be obtained from the student then the contact will be made on the following basis:

- It is deemed that sharing information is essential to the student's health and safety

- The decision will be taken by appropriately qualified staff in Student Support Services
- The decision will be reviewed and supported by University's Designated Safeguarding lead
- The decision will be based on a risk assessment

8.7 Information about the contact made will be appropriately recorded.

Appendix 1: Related Policies

- Health and Safety Policy
- Dignity and Respect Policy
- Domestic Violence and Coercion Policy
- Personal Relationship Policy
- Insurance
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Fatalities Procedures
- Wellbeing Strategy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Support to Study Policy
- Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
- Mitigating Circumstances Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Drugs and Alcohol Misuse Policy (in draft)

Appendix 2: Spotting Signs of Mental Health Difficulty

It is imperative to recognise when a student is experiencing mental health difficulty and in need of specialist support or when they need immediate action.

Everyone's experience of a mental health difficulty will be unique and different. Therefore, the signs and indicators for someone experiencing a mental health difficulty will vary between individuals.

The indicators below do not directly mean that the student has a mental health difficulty. The indicators should only be used as a means to start a dialogue with the student about what they consider the problem to be unless they are displaying signs of mental health crisis which will require immediate action.

Any of the indicators below can affect anyone at some time in their life, the duration and severity will vary. Some general signs and indicators to look out for could include:

- Changes in personality, mood, or appearance
- Irritability, aggression, or tearfulness
- Indecision, inability to concentrate or confused thinking
- Signs of alcohol or substance misuse
- Decline in daily functioning activities
- Deterioration in academic performance
- Excessive fear and worrying
- Constantly feeling overwhelmed
- Low mood, feelings of hopelessness or catastrophic thinking
- Paranoia
- Incongruent responses to situations

- Withdrawal
- Panic attacks
- Noticeable weight gain/loss
- Decline in personal hygiene
- Sleep disturbances

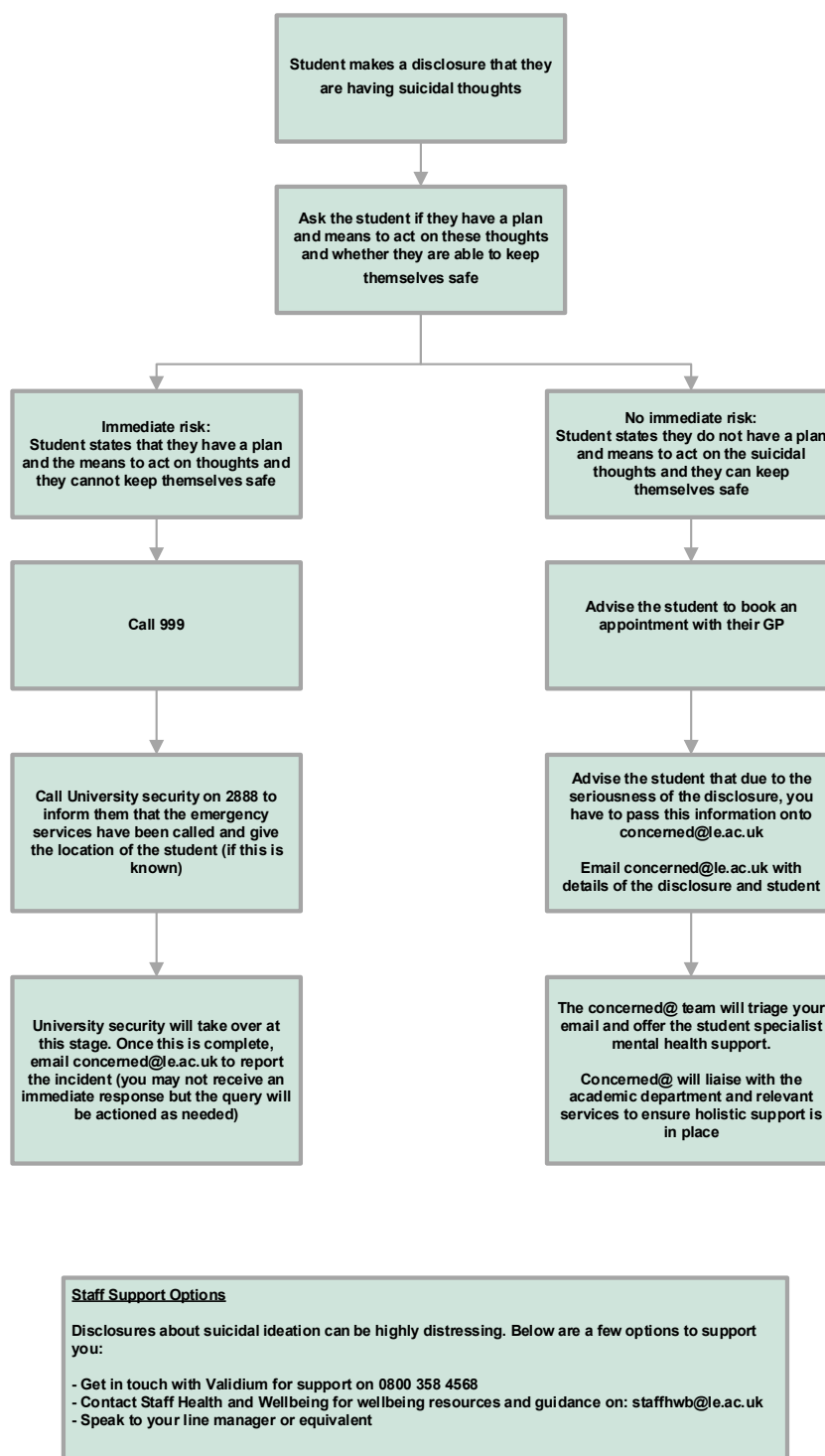
Some signs of potential mental health crisis:

- Student mentions suicidal thoughts, along with a plan, intent and means to act on them or immediate plans to harm themselves
- Student mentions an intention to harm others
- Severe emotional distress or decline in mental health condition
- Mentions feeling completely hopeless or that everything is pointless
- Increased communication activity where the content is incoherent or contains concerning content
- Behaving in a paranoid or delusional state

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

Appendix 3:

Managing Disclosures: Responding to Suicidal Ideation Disclosures



Student Support Services

Prevention	Early Intervention	Specialist Intervention	Crisis Management
• Advice and guidance on ways to look after mental health and wellbeing • Raising awareness and promotional events • Wellbeing embedded into the curriculum • Psychoeducation workshops • Study skills support • Financial and welfare support	• Staff training on mental health awareness • Signposting and advice information on webpages • Reasonable adjustments	• Student Wellbeing Service - psychological interventions • AccessAbility Centre • Student Welfare Service • Partnership working with NHS	• Cause for Concern group • Concerned@le.ac.uk • Suicide Safer Framework • Risk assessments

Please note these are some examples under the core categories, this is not an exhaustive list. Also, it is important to note that these categories do overlap and each are beneficial to all.

Suicide Safer Framework Action Plan:

Action	Owner
PREVENTION	
Promote Zero Suicide Alliance Suicide Awareness online training in communications and mental health/suicide safer campaigns.	Student Support Services in collaboration with Marketing and Communications
An annual review of roles and training, with a rolling training programme that includes suicide awareness training.	Student Support Services in collaboration with Organisational Development
Mental Health Awareness training to be rolled out to other areas including Sport and Active Life, Student and Library Information Services.	Student Support Services
Development of an annual communications plan.	Student Support Services in collaboration with Marketing and Communications
Review the University's Mental Health approach to ensure services support student needs using the Mental	Mental Health Working Group

Health Charter programme and apply for the Charter Award.	
Develop an information sharing agreement between the three local Universities and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust.	USSPG
In partnership with the LLR Suicide Prevention Audit Group, and USSPG consider ways address to reduce other access to means of suicide.	Student Support Services with LLR and USSPG
INTERVENTION	
All student facing staff to be trained in mental health and suicide awareness.	Student Support Services
Staff in teams who are 'frontline responders', to be trained in specialties.	Student Support Services
Consider engagement with prospective students as part of admissions/onboarding to encourage sharing of health and wellbeing needs.	Student Support Services and Future Students Office
Student Suicide risk assessment to be kept under review.	Student Support Services
Regular reporting to show reduction of risk through analysis of PHQ/GAD and incident data.	Student Support Services
Proposal for student and staff awareness training on Suicide Safety plans.	Student Support Services
Risk methodology kept under review to ensure it continues to be informed by best practice.	Student Support Services
Ensure that routes to report concerns are widely publicised to ensure all members of the University know how to report concern.	Student Support Services in collaboration with Marketing and Communications
POSTVENTION	
Review Fatalities Procedure to ensure it is appropriate when initiated in response to a suspected suicide.	Head of Student Support Services
Critical incident lessons learned from engagement with students and families is mapped into Fatalities Procedure and service standard operating procedures.	Head of Student Support Services
Student deaths (by suspected suicide) will be reviewed by the University Suicide Prevention Group to ensure lessons learned inform policy and process development.	University Suicide Prevention Group
Psychological safety plans for all front-line roles responding to/involved with student deaths.	Staff Health and Wellbeing Fatalities Lead Coordinator

Appendix 5: Useful Contacts for Signposting

Internal Services:

Student Wellbeing Service: <https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/Student-Support/SitePages/Making-a-self-referral.aspx>

Student Welfare Service: 0116 223 1185 welfare@le.ac.uk.
<https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/Student-Support/SitePages/Financial-Support.aspx>

AccessAbility Centre: 0116 252 5002 accessible@le.ac.uk

<https://le.ac.uk/accessability-centre>

Health Assured: 0800 028 3766. <https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/Student-Support/SitePages/Contact-Us.aspx>

Security Service: 0116 252 2023

Students Union: <https://www.leicesterunion.com/support/>

Chaplaincy: https://le.ac.uk/chaplaincy?gclid=EAlaIQobChMliO3x6vj0_QIVmvxRCh2-MgfIEAAYASAAEgLOzvD_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

External Services:

Central Access Point for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland: 0808 800 3302, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For emergencies: Visit A&E or dial 999

NHS Direct: 111

Samaritans: 116 123

Shout: Text service 85258

Student Minds: <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/findsupport.html>

Lamp: Mental health advocacy group <https://www.lampadvocacy.co.uk/contact-us/>

Turning Point: <https://www.turning-point.co.uk/contact-us.html>